

Task Force on Pesticide Ordinance Public Education (POPE)

Meeting Minutes: July 8th, 2009

7:30 P.M. at Robert Miller Recreation & Community Center

Participants:

Present:

Co-Chairs Fern Crete and Jay Vos; Members: Sid Bosworth, Bob Duncan, Jean Markey-Duncan, Mary Ellen Manock, Teri Winning-Verry; Others: Board of Health Chair Ian Galbraith

Proceedings:

Meeting called to order at 7:30 P.M. by Jay.

Teri volunteered to act as Secretary for this meeting.

Meeting Guidelines:

Meeting guidelines were agreed upon collectively and include

- Keeping meetings to time parameters
- Stick to the agenda
- Keep objectives clearly displayed
- Don't argue
- Don't interrupt
- One person has the floor at a time
- Maintain an air of respect amongst participants
- Time should be kept at the beginning of each meeting to allow for public comment

Objectives:

The objectives of the task force were read aloud and include the following:

1. To evaluate the existing methods for public education about the pesticide ordinance and its details
2. To decrease the routine application of lawn care chemicals
3. To increase compliance with the current and future ordinance by convincing people it is in their best interest to do so
4. To increase the number of informed and watchful citizens who will help with enforcement and increased compliance
5. To answer the question, "what is the perfect yard?" and to encourage a new cultural attitude about the aesthetic appearance of lawns and yards.
6. To educate the public concerning the environmental and health risks associated with the use of lawn care chemicals and thereby improve overall health conditions of the environment and the citizenry
7. To educate the public about the use of viable alternatives to synthetic chemicals

Jay noted that it will be the collective decision of the participants as to how the objectives will be addressed.

First Steps

Goal is to complete objectives and develop an action plan by March 1, 2009, at which time they will be presented to the Board of Health.

Revised pesticide ordinance:

A recommended revision to the existing pesticide ordinance was completed by the board over the course of the last year. Per Jay, the new ordinance is simpler. It also expands the jurisdiction of the board of health to regulate pesticide use beyond 500 feet of Lake Champlain and its tributaries. Per Jay the model for the revision was researched and based on similar efforts in other areas, particularly Toronto and the Province of Ontario (Canada).

The buffer zone

Jean and Bob suggested that many of the residents who live in buffer zones likely do not realize they are in a pesticide restricted zone nor have any idea exactly what those restrictions are. The team agreed that there is likely a lot of public confusion about the ordinance.

Brainstorming

- Would it be possible to have information about the boundaries of the buffer zone and the pesticide restrictions posted at hardware stores?
- Would cashiers agree to offer this information to customers buying pesticides?
- Could maps be posted in the lawn chemicals section of stores?
- A mass mailing to those in the buffer zone detailing restrictions was suggested.
- Would it be possible to notify residents via their electric bill that they are in fact in the buffer zone and what the penalties for violating the ordinance entail? Perhaps information could go out in BED newsletter.
- Front Porch Forums were mentioned as a means of knowledge sharing.
- Fern stated that we may need a philanthropist to assist with marketing costs and that it may also be possible to obtain grants for the project.
- Teri suggested that the team have a general idea about what education is already available in the community to avoid duplicating other efforts.
- Mary Ellen stated that she believes it is important to determine our audience. Who is using chemicals??
- The “Don’t P on your yard” campaign was discussed for its clever slogan and effective message.

Public Education

Members agreed to focus on a positive approach.

Jean suggested that information regarding the health risks as known today (particularly that even small chemical exposures over a long period of time can have toxic effects) should be emphasized in public teaching. Jean also mentioned that alternatives to current pesticide use are important.

Sid stated that there are some organic means of controlling pests such as corn gluten, fertilizer, over-seeding and proper mowing. Sid states that changing cultural norms regarding the ideal yard is paramount in reducing pesticide use.

Jean mentioned the idea of “lawn labs” in each ward where residents could see and learn to cultivate an organic lawn.

Sid believes he may be able to email some UVM graduate students who might be interested in developing a project or assisting the task force in some way.

It was agreed by all that the next meeting will be on Wednesday, August 19th from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm. Mary Ellen suggested the meeting room at the Water Department Treatment Facility as a location; Jay will check availability and book the location.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 P.M.

Minutes submitted by Teri Winning-Verry